

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for playing a wagering game having a special payout, the method comprising:

presenting a basic game having a plurality of randomly selected outcomes including a special-payout outcome;

5 presenting a side-wager option for a player;

in response to a player not choosing the side-wager option, providing the player with a first probability greater than zero of achieving the special-payout outcome;

10 in response to the player choosing the side-wager option, providing the player with a second probability of achieving the special-payout outcome, the second probability being greater than the first probability;

conducting the basic game with the first probability or the second probability, depending on the player's choice on the side-wager option; and

15 in response to conducting, crediting the player the special payout when the special-payout outcome occurs in the basic game.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising crediting the player a second and third payout when, respectively, a second and third randomly selected outcome occurs in the basic game.

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3. The method of claim 1, wherein the special payout is a progressive payout.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the special payout is a bonus game.

25 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of randomly selected outcomes are indicated by a plurality of symbols.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein each of the plurality of symbols is a card from a deck of playing cards.

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7. The method of claim 5, wherein the wagering game is a slot machine and each of the plurality of symbols is a reel symbol.
8. The method of claim 5, wherein providing the player with a second probability of achieving the special-payout outcome comprises increasing the number of winning symbols in the plurality of symbols.
9. The method of claim 5, wherein providing the player with a second probability of achieving the special-payout outcome comprises modifying the method the wagering game uses to read the plurality of symbols.
10. A method for playing a wagering game on a gaming terminal, the wagering game having a progressive payout, the method comprising:
presenting a basic game having a plurality of randomly selected outcomes including a progressive-payout outcome;
presenting a side-wager option for a player;
presenting a first spinning reel, the first spinning reel providing the player with a first probability greater than zero of achieving the progressive-payout outcome;
presenting a second spinning reel, the second spinning reel providing the player with a second probability of achieving the progressive-payout outcome, the second probability being greater than the first probability; and
in response to the player selecting the side-wager option, substituting the second spinning reel for the first spinning reel, increasing the player's probability of winning the progressive payout.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the substituting step is performed by a controller in the gaming terminal.
12. A gaming terminal for playing a wagering game having a special payout with a first payout and a second payout, the gaming terminal comprising a basic game having a randomly selected outcome, the gaming terminal having two options for being eligible for the special payout, the two options including (i) a side-wager input option

and (ii) a max-wager option, whereby, in response to selection of one of the two options, the gaming terminal awards the player the first payout when a first randomly selected outcome is achieved in the basic game and the gaming terminal awards the player the second payout when a second randomly selected outcome is achieved in the
5 basic game.

13. The terminal of claim 12, wherein the special payout is one of a progressive jackpot and a bonus game jackpot.

10 14. The terminal of claim 12, wherein the max-wager option comprises wagering the maximum amount on all of a plurality of paylines.

15. The terminal of claim 12, wherein the side-wager option is a button or a key.

15 16. The terminal of claim 12, wherein the first and second randomly selected outcomes comprise a plurality of symbols.

17. The terminal of claim 16, wherein each of the plurality of symbols is a card from a deck of playing cards.

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18. The terminal of claim 16, wherein the gaming terminal is a slot machine and each of the plurality of symbols is on a slot reel.

19. The terminal of claim 12, in combination with at least one other gaming
25 terminal for conducting wagering games, each of the gaming terminals having the two options for being eligible for the special payout, the gaming terminals further comprising signage located above and coupled to the gaming terminals, the signage displaying the special payout and for receiving a signal from one of the gaming terminals that the gaming terminal is eligible to win a special payout, the gaming
30 terminals and the signage being a gaming system.

20. The gaming system of claim 19, wherein the signage includes a signage controller for controlling an outcome of the special payout on one of the gaming terminals.
- 5 21. The gaming system of claim 20, wherein each of the plurality of gaming terminals includes a gaming terminal controller, the gaming terminal controller being in communication with the signage controller.
22. The gaming system of claim 19, wherein each of the plurality of gaming
10 terminals are identical machines.
23. The gaming system of claim 19, wherein the special payout is a progressive payout.
- 15 24. The gaming system of claim 19, wherein the first payout is a bonus game payout.
25. A gaming terminal for playing a wagering game, comprising:
a basic game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected
20 outcome of the basic game, the basic game also having a plurality of paylines and a maximum wager on each of the plurality of paylines;
a progressive payout having a first payout; and
an input device for allowing a player to become eligible for the progressive payout;
25 wherein the gaming terminal presents the player with two independent options to be eligible for the progressive payout including (i) the player activating the input device and (ii) the player choosing to play all of the paylines and placing the maximum wager on each of the plurality of paylines;
30 wherein, in response to one of the two options being chosen, the gaming terminal awards the player the first payout when a first randomly selected outcome is achieved.

26. The gaming terminal of claim 26, wherein in response to the input device being activated, the gaming terminal awards the player a third payout when a third randomly selected outcome is achieved.

5 27. The gaming terminal of claim 26, the progressive payout further having a second payout and wherein, in response to one of the two options being chosen, the gaming terminal awards the player the second payout when a second randomly selected outcome is achieved.

10 28. A method for playing a wagering game having a special payout, the method comprising:

conducting a basic game having a plurality of randomly selected outcomes;
presenting a side-wager option for a player to be eligible for the special payout;
presenting a maximum number of paylines and a maximum wager for each
15 payline; and

in response to the player selecting the side-wager option or choosing the maximum number of paylines and placing the maximum wager for each of the paylines, crediting the player the special payout when a special-payout outcome occurs in the basic game.

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29. A gaming terminal for playing a wagering game having a special payout, the gaming terminal comprising:

a basic game having a plurality of randomly selected outcomes, including a special-payout outcome that awards the special payout;

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a side-wager input device;

wherein in response to a player not choosing the side-wager input device, the gaming terminal providing the player with a first probability greater than zero of achieving the special payout; and

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in response to the player activating the side-wager input device, the gaming terminal providing the player with a second probability of achieving the special-payout outcome, the second probability being higher than the first probability, and the gaming terminal further crediting the player the special payout if the special-payout outcome occurs.

30. The gaming terminal of claim 31, wherein the special payout is a progressive jackpot.
31. The gaming terminal of claim 31, wherein the special payout is a bonus game
5 jackpot.
32. The gaming system of claim 31, wherein the plurality of randomly selected outcomes are indicated by a plurality of symbols.
- 10 33. The gaming terminal of claim 34, wherein each of the plurality of symbols is a card from a deck of playing cards.
34. The gaming terminal of claim 34, wherein each of the plurality of symbols is a standard slot machine symbol.
- 15 35. The gaming terminal of claim 34, wherein the number of symbols comprising the special-payout outcome in the plurality of symbols is increased when the side-wager option is chosen.
- 20 36. The gaming terminal of claim 34, wherein the gaming terminal alters its method of evaluating the plurality of symbols to increase the second probability of a winning outcome.